

## **The President:**

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Sweden.

First, I would like to thank Special Coordinator Mr. Mladenov for his tireless work and that of the entire United Nations staff on the ground.

The international community is committed to a two-State solution with an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, and with Jerusalem as the future capital of both States. However, the two-State solution is becoming more distant each day. The constant deterioration in the situation on the ground, with continued settlement expansion, demolitions and violence, is destroying the hopes for peace. We must avoid a move towards a one-State reality and perpetual occupation.

Sweden's long-standing engagement on the Middle East peace process is based on international law, including human rights law and international humanitarian law. It was our support for the two-State solution and our desire to make the parties less unequal that led us to recognize the State of Palestine in 2014.

The international community has an important role to play in moving from words to action by helping to break the current deadlock and by finally ending the occupation that started 50 years ago. We welcome the adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), which is a milestone towards resumed efforts to save the two-State solution. We must now encourage the parties to swiftly implement its provisions, as has been stated by everyone in the Chamber today. More than 70 countries met in Paris last Sunday in order to save and promote the two-State solution. We commend France for its initiative — a much-needed recommitment to the peace process. We welcome the adoption of the joint statement of the Paris Middle East Conference, especially the recommendation to refrain from unilateral steps that prejudge the outcome of negotiations on final status issues, including the future status of Jerusalem, and the stated readiness of the interested parties to meet again before the end of the year to review progress.

As part of the French initiative, Sweden convened a working group on civil society, which heard the voices of 150 civil-society organizations in Israel and Palestine. We thank all the countries and international organizations that have supported those efforts, and we welcome the fact that other countries now want to join. In those consultations, it was made clear that many in the post-Oslo generation, on both sides, had lost hope that the two-State solution is attainable. We need to engage civil society to revive a public debate on the prospects for peace and the two-State solution. We need to show young women and men that there is an alternative to the current violence, the depressing status quo and the continuously negative developments on the ground. Sweden will therefore

host a civil- society forum this spring.

We fully support the efforts of the United Nations, the Quartet and the League of Arab States. The United Nations and its presence, through various United Nations bodies on the ground, play an important role in supporting the Palestinian people. We support a reinvigorated Quartet that moves forward to seek to facilitate the swift implementation of the recommendations contained in its report of 7 July 2016 (S/2016/595, annex). We highlight the importance of implementing the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. Finally, I would like to recognize the outgoing United States Administration for its efforts, including Secretary Kerry's remarks on 28 December. We look forward to continued United States engagement in support of the two-State solution.

On Lebanon, Sweden welcomes the election of Michel Aoun as President on 31 October 2016 and the formation of a Government of national accord, led by Prime Minister Saad Hariri, in December. We hope that these positive developments will now pave the way for parliamentary elections. We commend Lebanon for hosting more than 1.1 million Syrian refugees and call for the implementation of the shared commitments on refugees made at the London Conference on 4 February 2016. We support United Nations-led efforts on the ground.

Finally, the situation in Syria is the crisis of our time, with a devastating toll in human suffering. We welcome the unity in the Council in December that led to the adoption of resolution 2336 (2016).

Despite the reduced levels of violence resulting from the ceasefire, humanitarian access remains dismal. All parties to the conflict, not least the Syrian Government, must ensure full, timely, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian workers countrywide.

Sweden looks forward to a resumption of the United Nations-led intra-Syrian talks in Geneva on 8 February, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), and hopes that the Astana meeting can help create the right conditions for this. Syrian women must be fully involved in the process. We must also work together to ensure accountability for the atrocities committed during the conflict, some of which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. The blinking lamp on the microphone signals that the time is up; it is not an encouragement to keep talking. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I wish also to inform the Council that we will be carrying on this open debate right through the lunch hour, as we have a large number of speakers.